



# Stanford eCorner

## Career Advice

Brook Byers, *Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers*

April 20, 2005

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1315/Career-Advice>

Byers advises graduating students who are budding entrepreneurs to look for a company that will mentor and train them with invaluable experience.



### Transcript

These would be generalizations, though, and so I feel badly about that because you all have such individual situations going on about what you study, what you're interested in, what you want to do, and the rate at which you want to do that. So I want to go to the rate part. So I think back to when I was getting out of business school across the street, Stanford Business School. My perception of the world was that I didn't understand why employers didn't see that I should really be put in a fairly high position early on, and why I had to pay dues and things like that, because I was in a hurry to get there. And that's good. You want to be that way. You want to be in a hurry. You want to feel that anxiousness and that sense of urgency. That all goes with the good set of traits. The best advice I got at that time was from a couple of people who told me that when I was making my decision about what job to go into--and second job and third job out of school--is to go for experience, not position.

And what they meant by that was, go pick the place where you're going to get the experience you want and do not pay attention to the title, the salary--if you can set that one aside, if you've got the economic situation where you can--all of those things. Go for the experience you want, because you kind of want to existentially put yourself out, say, 15 years in your life and look back and ask yourself, "Well, what are you going to wish you had done?" Well, if you can go be Vice-President at a start-up--but, actually, that's not a job you should take--then be honest with yourself. Don't do that because it's a VP and it's going to look cool on your cards, or something like that. You're actually going to do yourself a lot of harm because if you're not the right person for that--it would be better to go to a company that really knows what it's doing where they're going to take the time and mentor you and you're going to be trained there. And go for that experience so that when you look back in your life you'll say, "Boy, I did that. I laid down the base in that place. I went to a fantastic company that is well-run, successful, well-organized." It always makes me sad when I see someone who spent the first couple of years out of school all charged up about entrepreneurship, and then they went to a series of companies that didn't work out. And these become not brands, obviously. And then, a fact of life is you kind of become known--after five years when you're out of school, you're not known as the Stanford person. You're known as the person who worked at Google or the person who worked at Genomic Health or IBM or General Electric or something like that.

That's how you're known then. And I don't care what your GPA was and how you ranked in your class; after three to five years, that's not how you're known. And in fact, after a period of time, nobody asks you what your GPA was. So that's so important a statistic in your STAs and all that stuff. So that would kind of be one thing I would try to impart.